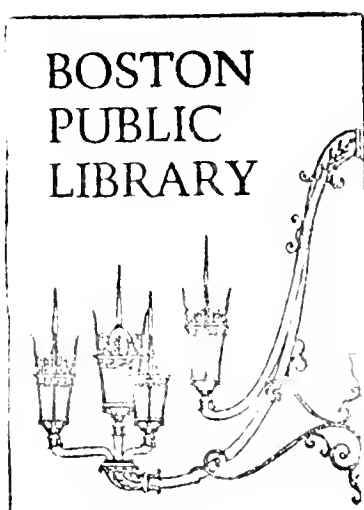


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BLACKSTONE BLOCK

Its Development from the
17th to the 20th Centuries.

Prepared for the Waterfront Project by Nina
Perkins, Mayor's Historic Conservation Comm.
July 1963.

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Waterfront

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PLACESTONE FLOCK,
Its Development from the
17th to the 20th Centuries



Prepared for the Waterfront Project

by Nina Jenkins, Mayor's Historic Conservation Committee

July, 1973



Negatives property of the Mayor's Historic
Conservation Committee.

ORTH St.



General view



#20-22



#20-22



#26



General View
Hanover St.

ON St.



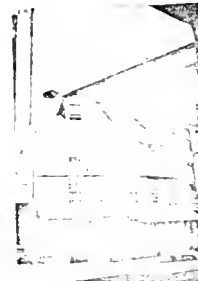
General view



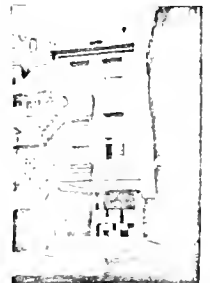
#15, 19, 21



#15, 19, 21
rear view



Union Oyster
House



#37 Union St.

EEK SQUARE



View from
Blackstone St



Marshall St
towards
Union St



Marshall St
from Union St.



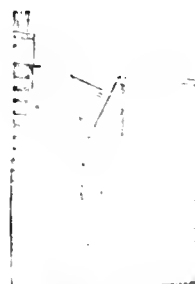
Marsh Lane.



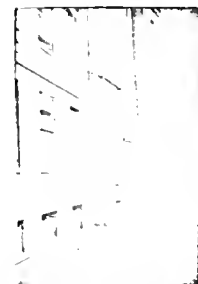
Ebenezer
Hancock House



Ebenezer Hancock
house.



Ebenezer
Hancock House.



Public Alley
& 20)

CKSTONE ST.



#100-122



General view

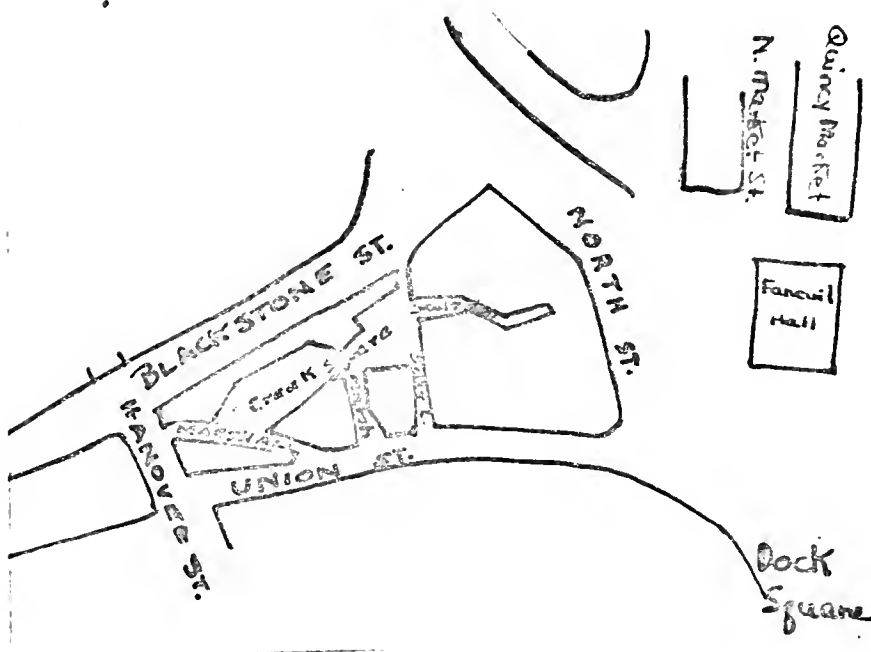


General view



General view.

STREET LISTING



BLACKSTONE BLOCK

- UNION ST: 1640-'50 (Clough Map, 1902) from corner of North St across Hanover St. to Mill Pond, 'way from cove to cove'.
 1708: named Union St.
 1925 widen Union St at ^ecorner of North St.
- Hanover St: 1640-'50 (Clough Map, 1922) 'the long back street'
 1708 Named Hanover St.
 1868 widen on south side between Union and Blackstone sts up to 20'
- Blackstone St. formerly Mill Creek
 1833 Blackstone st. laid out over Mill Creek
 1951 northeast side of Blackstone St. torn down for elevated highway
- North St: 1640-'50 (Clough Map, 1922) way along the water
 1708 named Ann St. (from Union to Cross sts.)
 1852 Named North St.
- Marshall St: from #43 Union st. to #149 Hanover st.
 1708 named Marshall Lane
 1822 named Marshall st.
- Marsh Lane: from #35 Union st easterly to 9 Creek Sq.
 1708 Named Marsh Lane
- Salt Lane: #25 Union st easterly to #19 Creek Sq.
 1708 named Salt Lane

Creek Square: 10 Marshall st. to #70 Blackstone St.

1708: named Creek Lane

part called Creek Square(1803), Hatter's Square(1823)

part called Hancock Row(1826).

1855: whole called Creek Square

Scott Alley: from Ann st(North st) to Creek Sq.

1708:named Scottow's Alley

1823:named Scott Alley

Historical development of the Blackstone Block
discussed by century under the headings-
topography, and architecture.

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17th CENTURY

Topography

The area enclosed by Union, Hanover, Blackstone and North sts was part of the original settlement of Boston, lying between the Town Dock and the Mill Creek, where pathways to houses and shortcuts across town soon formed the major passageways which exist today. This basic pattern of streets, alley and lanes reflects the small scale and informal relationship of the ~~small~~, 17th c. colony.

Although the first official directory of streets was published in 1708, "The Names of the Streets, Lanes & Alleys within the Town of Boston, in New England", all the ones in this small block have 17th c. roots. A map of 1640-1650 (Clough, 1922) shows the existence of: Union st. as the way from cove to cove; of Hanover St as the main passageway across Mill Creek to the north end; and North St as the passageway along the waterfront and docks. The interior network of narrow lanes and alleys all are informally mentioned during the 17th c. in such a way as 'the way from _____ street to _____ dock' etc.^{1.}

On the northeast, the area is bounded by the Mill Creek, which by 1650 was extended through to the Mill Cove. A small stream causes the north eastern part of this area to be somewhat grassy and marshy.

Architecture

In 1644, the town of Boston which held this marshy lot of land in

1 Thwing, A. H. 1920: The Crooked & Narrow Streets of the Town of Boston 1630-1822. Boston. pp 86-87

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commonage, began to make grants to individuals. By 1650, a few houses existed on the edges of this area; none of which have survived. Original settlers such as Thomas Marshall and Scottow can only be remembered in the names of the streets and alleys.

Nearby, in the Town Dock area, in 1680, a wood and rough cast building was erected, which managed to survive to as late as 1860, and ¹ to become very familiar to us, through the many drawings and photographs, as the Old Feather Store. The many gables, the projecting upper stories, and the use of wood and rough cast, exemplify the popularity of the medieval English style in this period. It originally served as a tenement house above, with ^a shop on the first floor, a building type very common in England. It did not become a feather store until 1806. The Final Report of the Boston National Historic Sites Commission (B.N.H.S.C.) concludes that the employment of roughcast was prevalent on houses in the neighborhood of the Old Feather Store from the writings of the antiquarian, Jeremy Belknap, who in 1795 wrote "the houses and warehouses near the town-dock, which were rebuilt after the great fire of 1679, were either constructed with brick, or plastered on the outside with a strong cement, intermixed with gravel and glass, and slated on the top. Several of these plastered houses are yet remaining in Ann (now North) Street in their original form; others have been altered and repaired" (B.N.H.S.C., p. 71). An early map shows the popularity of ² this style.

Not far away, on the site of the present day North Market st. buildings

1 Cummings, A. "Old Feather Store" Old Time New England, Spring 1958. In Old Time New England

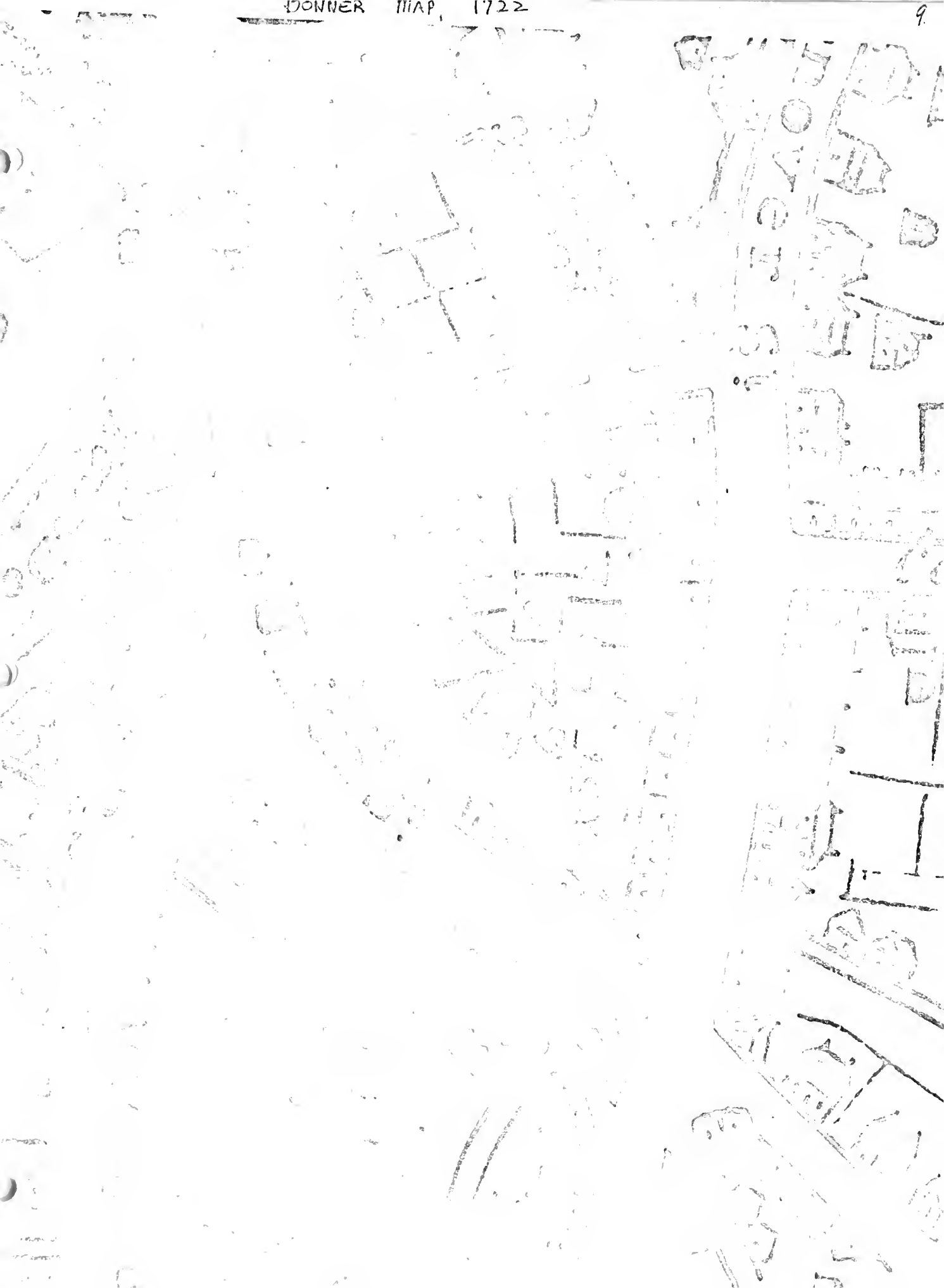
2 ibid opp. p 85

stood the old Triangular Warehouse, built also c. 1680. Triangular in shape, this building had large, octagonal, fortress-like towers on each corner, and slightly projecting upper story, pointing again to the predominance of the medieval, tudor elements in 17th c. Boston architecture. It stood as "the most impressive if not commodious commercial structure along the entire waterfront" (B.N.H.S.C., p. 72). Thus, very early, this area by its central location and proximity to the Town Dock, became primarily a commercial center; a characteristic which holds true for the present day despite the drastic change in the waterline.

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18TH CENTURY

The 18th c. was a period of development for the town of Boston, clearly evidenced by the construction of Long Wharf in 1711. The commercial and residential growth was felt in this small block where, by the end of the century, most of the land was covered with brick and wooden buildings.

Topography

Bonner Map of 1722: The pattern of streets in 1722 map resembles basically the present day format with some small alterations. The marshy land off Mill Creek has not been filled and a passageway connecting Marshall St. to the Mill Creek, exists.

Bonner Map of 1769(Price edition): The status of this area has changed only in that there are now buildings which line the eastern side of the passageway from Marshall St. to North St.(later called Creek Sq. and Scott Alley) as well as along the passageway from Marshall St. to Mill Creek, thereby defining more clearly the layout of these streets. The marshy land still exists here, but by the end of the century it ^{was} has been filled in and built upon.

Architecture

In the 18th c., buildings primarily of brick and wood were erected. It is extremely fortunate that two brick buildings of this period have survived in comparatively good conditions: the Union Oyster house at #41-#43 Union st,; and the Ebenezer Hancock house at #10 Marshall st.



Union Oyster House

This 3 1/2 story brick building, occupying the corner lot where Marshall St. veres off from Union St., is genuinely representative of early Boston architecture, by the use of a gambrel roof, flemish-bond brickwork, and rectangular, small paned windows. The interior, however, is of a 19th c. date when the building became an oyster house. Historically, it is significant as the place where Isaiah Thomas published the Massachusetts Spy from 1771 to 1775 before the Revolution. In the late 18th c. and 19th c. it became the home and successful dry goods store of Hopestill and Thomas Capen.

The exterior has gone through several phases with the addition of dormers, a large neon sign, and a second story bay window(now removed). The B.N.H.S.C. accepts a date "prior to 1714" as given by the Historic American Buildings Survey, as "plausible for the original features of the remaining exterior". (B.N.H.S.C., p. 65)

Ebenezer Hancock House

The second major work in this area is the Ebenezer Hancock house, which stands hidden from the main stream of traffic within the enclosed area of Marshall St. and Creek Square. The hipped roof, flemish-bond brick, curved brick cove, and flat arched windows suggest a mid 18th c. date. ¹ Inside, the upper two floors have retained their original Georgian woodwork, but the first floor was remodeled for a shoestore which started operation as early as 1796. As with the Union Oyster House, the Ebenezer Hancock House has played a

1 There are differences of opinion regarding the date of this building. The B.N.H.S.C. suggests before 1737 as it was in that year described as a brick tenement in a deed of sale. Further support is given this theory for the grantor is James Davenport, brother-in-law of Benjamin Franklin and baker, who might very likely be responsible for the large brick oven found in the cellar. Other writers have given various dates, some as late as 1760.

significant role in Boston's history. It was here that Ebenezer Hancock, younger brother of John, and Paymaster during the Revolutionary War, set up his headquarters and in 1778 stored the huge loan of 2 million silver crowns from King Louis XVI for the Continental Army. In 1798, the first floor became a shoestore, the oldest one in Boston and perhaps in the country.

Following is an account of some buildings which were of special significance to this small area in the 18th c, but which have since been lost.

Behind the Ebenezer Hancock house, on the east side of Creek Lane, John Hancock built several brick houses in 1785, long known as "Hancock Row". Unfortunately these were torn down as late as 1942.

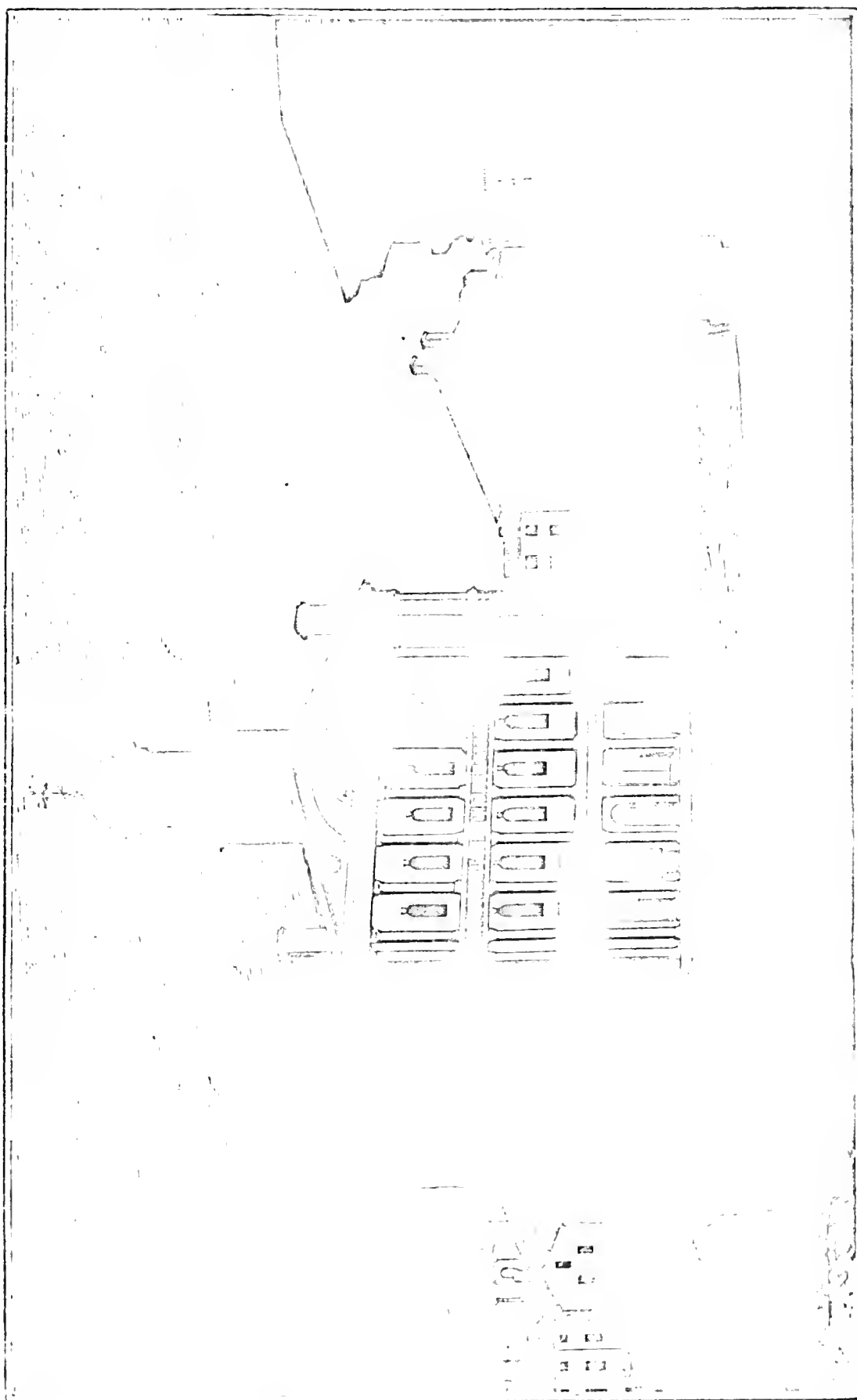
Opposite the Ebenezer Hancock house is the famous "Boston Stone" which is, in reality, two surviving parts of an old paint mill, imported in 1700 from England by the painter, Thomas Child. It was placed in a similar position in the wooden mansion built by Thomas Child in 1737 on this same site. This building was replaced by a brick building in 1835.

In this same era, and nearby on the east side of Creek Square, was the great wooden mansion of Adino Bulfinch, great grandfather of Charles, built in the first quarter of the 18th c. The building was standing as late as 1841¹ but shortly thereafter replaced by brick building.

Another well-known 18th c. dweller in this neighborhood was Josiah Franklin, the candle maker at the sign of the Blue Bell, and the father of Benjamin Franklin. The house was located on the south west corner of Union and Hanover sts, but was eventually lost with the widening of Union st and Hanover st (1868)

Thus, in this small area collected an interesting group of people, ranging from craftsmen to political leaders.

¹ Bulfinch, E.S. Charles Bulfinch, p. 13



[East view of Faneuil Hall, including the southwest corner of Quincy Market.]

By the end of the 18th c., noticable trends had developed. North st., by its location along the waterline and proximity to the Town Dock, became "For many years...a commercial center, famous for its wharves and taverns. At one time or other there were nine taverns of which we have some authentic record, besides several coffee houses"¹.

Across the street in a block of buildings located between Faneuil Hall and North st, was the site of an old theater, thought to belong originally to the English before the Revolution, then to the Columbian Lodge of Masons, then by 1804 to Woods' Boston Museum. By 1822 the Woods' Boston Museum was absorbed into the New England Museum and the building itself was torn down in 1895.²

The rest of the area was primarily residential³ with only a few buildings officially listed as stores. The common practice, however, was to have a store on the first floor of the house, with the upper floors devoted to the dwelling area. This custom, borrowed from England and already used in the 17th c. Old Feather Store, was continued in the 18th c. buildings: the present Union Oyster house in the 18th c. served as both a dwelling and very successful dry goods store of Hopestill and Thomas Capen, located at #41 Union st, which then "lay at the center of Boston's retail shopping district".⁴ Similarly, the Ebenezer Hancock house functioned both as a dwelling above and shoestore below from 1796 on.

Around Creek Square developed a nucleus of small crafts and businesses. "As soon as tradesmen, butchers, fishermen and artisans began to build around

1 Thwing, A.H. 1920: The Crooked and Narrow Streets of the old Town of Boston, 1630-1822, p.34/

2 Brayley, A. "Woods' Boston Museum" ^{The} Eastern ~~Magazine~~, 1895. pp125-130

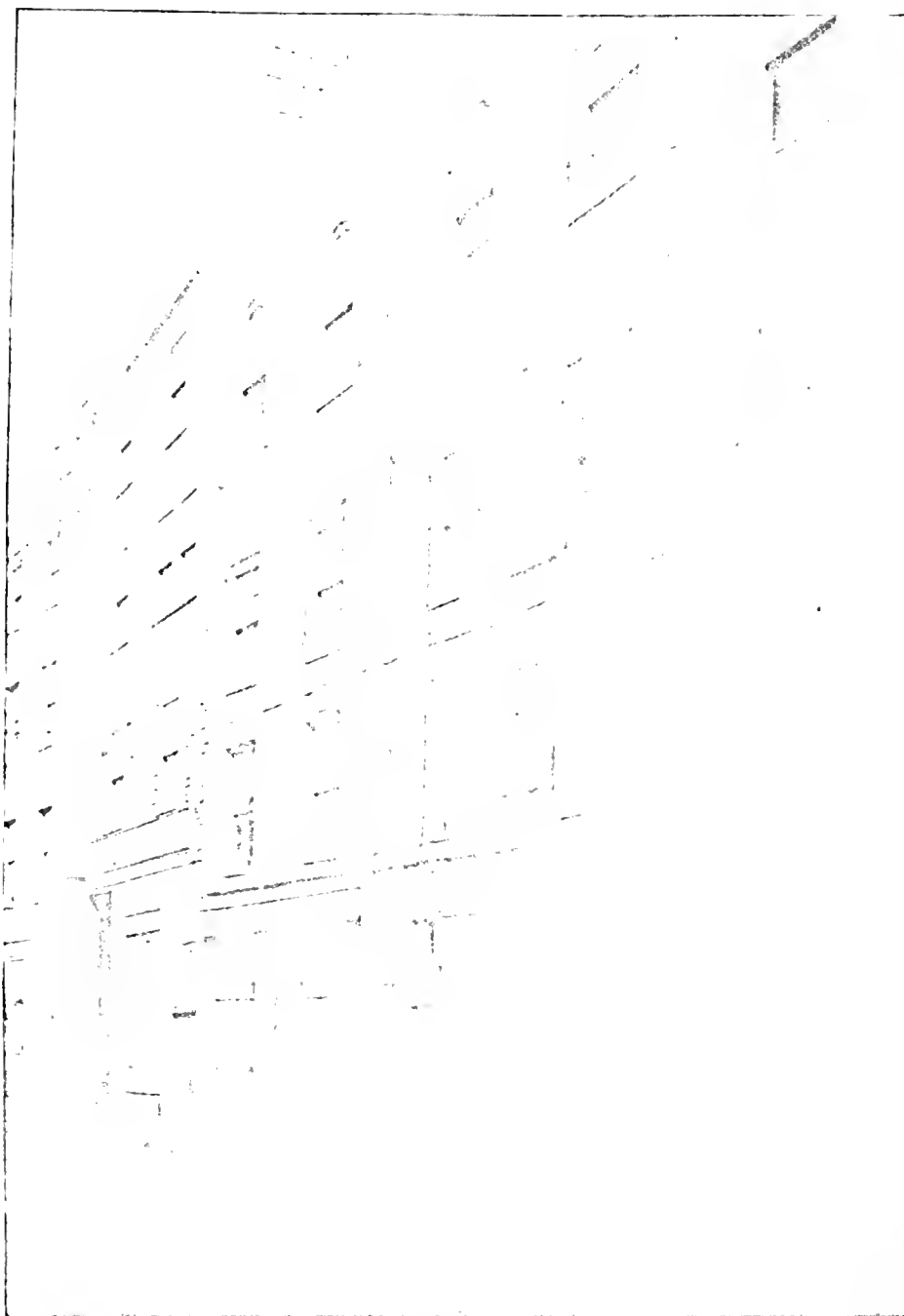
3 "U.S. Income Tax of 1798" 22nd Report of the Record Commissioners, Boston.

4 B.N.H.S.C., p. 66

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WOODS' BOSTON MUSEUM, — NORTH ANN STREET END TO THE CORNER OF
BEADWELL LANE.

the marsh, it took only a short time to obliterate both the stream and the marsh. By the time of the Revolution, the marsh had long been replaced by Hatters' Square, a name that denotes one of many crafts practiced in the vicinity"¹. A final vestige of the 18th c., a wooden blacksmith shop, crumbled and was taken away over 20 years ago.

¹ B.N.H.S.C., p. 69



19TH CENTURY

Topography

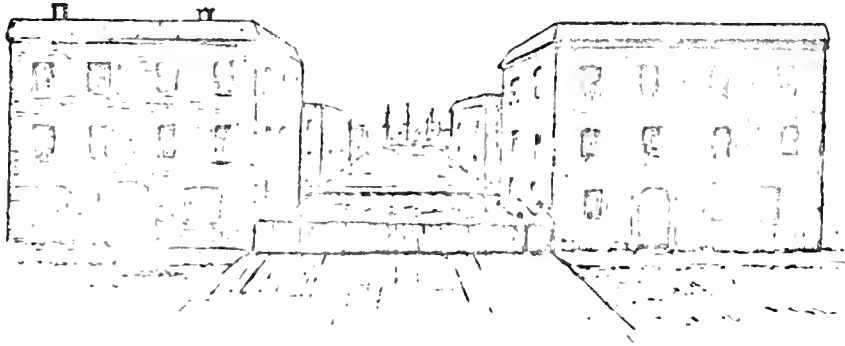
1814 Hales Map; Hales map shows that the former marshy land has been filled and built up. The pattern of lanes and the location of lots and buildings thereon were established at this point although today there is a vast change in scale of the buildings. The passageway from Marshall St. to the Creek found in the Bonner Map of 1769 (Price edition), is now discontinued^u but a new one is found running from Creek Square to the Creek. The triangular block bounded by Union, Hanover and Marshall sts, now is pulled closer into the whole block, thus correcting the relative widths of Union and Marshall sts.

1833 is an extremely significant date for this small area as it was in that year that the Mill Creek was filled in, to form Blackstone street. The new street cut the existing lots way back, thus requiring a whole new building activity. In addition, the fact that it was now a street, not a creek, changed the siting of the buildings- so that they would border along the edge of the street and face out onto the street rather than inward to the square.

In 1868, Hanover st. was widened on the south east side as much as 20', necessitating a certain amount of rebuilding. Plans to widen North St. between Union and Blackstone Sts. 10 years before had been canceled.

1874 Atlas. The first official atlas of Boston in 1874, shows this area as it stands today: an intricate pattern of streets and buildings fitting together as neatly as a jigsaw puzzle. Since this time, the buildings have retained the exact same outline, although some have been replaced.

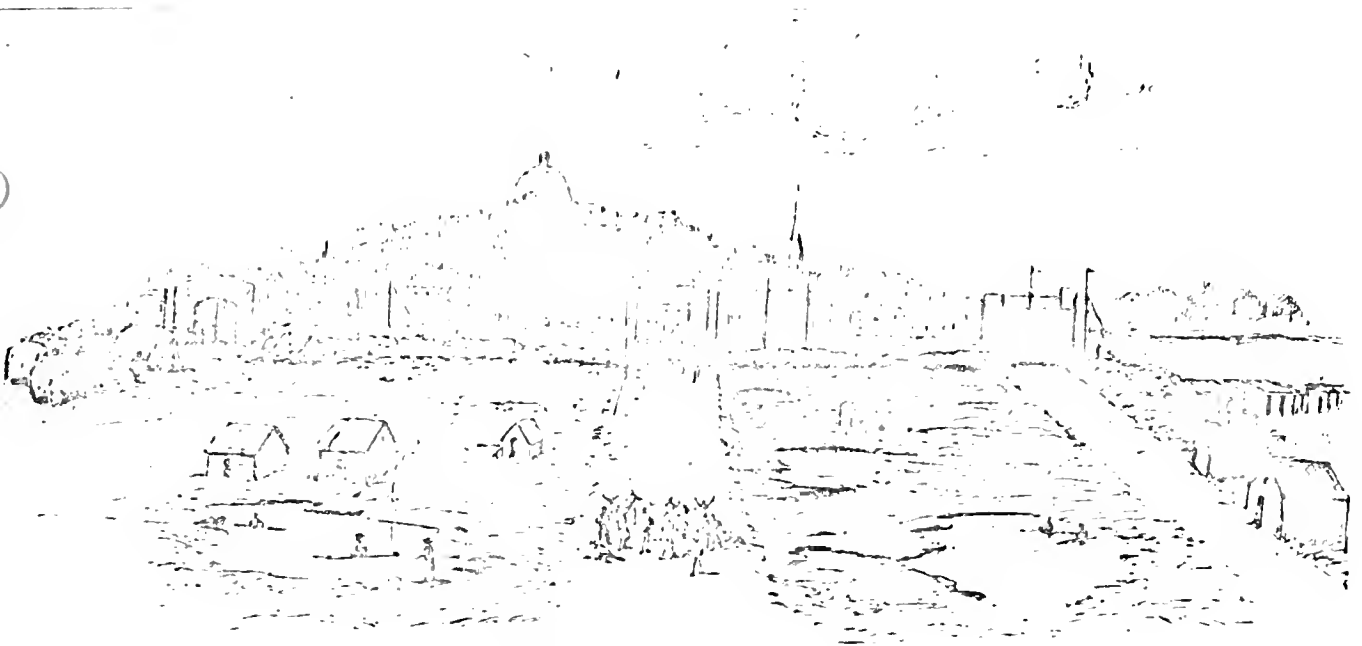
Views of Mill Creek as a canal, before it was filled in 1833.



VIEW LOOKING WEST FROM HANOVER STREET BRIDGE OVER THE CANAL,
HAYMARKET SQUARE AND VESSELS IN THE DISTANCE.

HANOVER AND LINDEN
STREETS.

HANOVER AND BOND, ENDICOTT
STREETS.



VIEW OF THE NEW LAND IN 1828.

HAYMARKET SQUARE.

TRAVERSE STREET.

BOATS GOING THROUGH THE CANAL.

WALTON STREET BRIDGE
UNFINISHED
CAUSEWAY STREET, WITH
DRAW BRIDGE OPEN.

Taken from the corner of Traverse St. and N. Washington St.
looking south towards Beacon Hill.

[Handwritten notes in a box:
From the corner of
Traverse St.
looking south
towards Beacon Hill.]

Architecture

The 19th c. starts off with the full development of the federal style. The buildings of the early 19th c. , that have survived in this area, were built on the exact sites which, according to the U.S. Direct Tax of 1798, had ^{on them}, in 1798, brick buildings 3 stories in height rather than the present 4 stories. The possibility exists that the buildings could ~~have~~ have been built up from 18th c. structures, although no clues have yet been found. Typical federal features- gable roof, flared lintels, small cornice over the top square windows- can be found in the 3 brick row buildings on Union St. (#15, 19 21) 4 stories high, 2-3 bays wide. In these buildings, as well as in all the others in this group, the bricks are laid in regular courses, rather than in flemish bond, indicating a date, after the first decade of the 19th c. Other similar buildings (#20-22 North st, # 26 North st, and # 37 Union st) come a few years later as they have straight lintels, characteristic of the Greek Revival style, substituted for the Federal flared lintel. Both buildings types, characteristic of the first 3 or 4 decades of the 19th c., were widely used throughout the Waterfront and may be seen still today in long rows ^{on} such as Central St., lower part of State St., or Commercial St. etc.

The forming of Blackstone street in 1833 provided an impetus to the building activity in this area especially in the 1830s-'50s. On Blackstone St. itself, the corner building at Hanover st. (south west corner), a 3 story (originally 5), 8 bay, brick structure was built in 1835, 2 years after the street was laid out. Most of the others along Blackstone st. were erected within the next 20 years, consistently using unbonded brick, straight brown-stone lintels and an average height of 4-5 stories. Many buildings along

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BLACKSTONE ST.

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Blackstone st., built at the height of Boston's commercial activities, have had their upper 3-4 stories torn down within the last 30 years, due primarily to a decline in business and invention of new machinery.

Into the same building type- straightforward, commercial, brick, plain buildings- and at about the same period, fall the so-called Union Block (corner of Union and Marshall sts), the Wiggin Block (corner of Marshall and Hanover sts) and the building on the corner of Marshall st. and Creek Square.

A more elaborate style can be found in a masonry fronted brick building (#31-35 Union St.) whose facade was decorated with European motifs such as an Italianate bracket cornice and a French mansard roof, illustrating the general trend around the middle of the 19th c. #38-44 North st. (originally 5 stories, now 2) also has a masonry treatment, found in the large granite warehouses on the waterfront, especially popular in the 1850s. On the corner of Blackstone and North is a brick, 2 story (originally 5) building, elaborated with corner quoins which may also be of this era, although its original character has been completely lost.

The late 19th c. saw some large scale buildings erected on North St. These buildings and the ones built in the early 20th c. follow the outlines of the earlier small buildings, resulting in awkward, almost ludicrous, shaped buildings. # 24 North St. is a 6 story, 2 bay, brick commercial building with a flat roof and arched corbel tables, designed by Peabody and

Stearns, and built in 1889. In 1899, #32 North St, a 2 story (originally 6) 4 bay brick building designed by Mackay and Dunham, and #34-36 North St, a 2 story, 2 bay structure designed by Charles B. Dunham were erected, both decorated with rather uninteresting Revival motifs.

Inside Creek Square, there are a few brick buildings dating from the early part of the century, but they exist only as a back portion to buildings facing the main streets and have, as a result, not been kept up. (The back parts of #31, 15, 19 Union St. and # 28-34 North St.)

#23-27 Union St, originally part of the adjacent row of federal brick buildings, has been renovated during this past year by the Charlestown Savings Bank. The roof height was lowered to 2 stories, the whole interior and remodeled, the facade completely rebricked, so that none of the original appearance of the building has survived, nor is the present facade an accurate restoration. The row of brick houses down Salt Lane have also been taken over and redone, but glimpses of the original arched brick doorways and windows are still possible in the brick work of the side wall.

In summary, the major changes in topography came in the creation of Blackstone St. in 1833 and the widening of Hanover St in 1868. The development of commercial architecture of the 19th c. is thoroughly recorded: beginning with the 4 story federal brick buildings, moving to the 4-5 story flat roofed, brick structures with straight lintels of the Greek Revival

period, then the richly decorated masonry fronted buildings with bracket cornices, reflecting the import of European 'motifs' around mid 19th c., and then the late 19th c. buildings of even larger scale(6 stories) and revival motifs.

It was during this century also that the character of the area underwent a gradual change. The early 1800s saw the continuation of the 18th c. integrated commercial and residential buildings where a small store would be located in the first story of a house. After the first quarter of the century, single larger brick buildings of 4-5 stories in height, were replacing groups of small wood and brick buildings. For example the Union and Wiggin Blocks absorbed all the buildings on the triangular site of Hanover, Marshall and Union sts. #31-35 Union st. usurped the many small buildings between Marsh and Salt Lanes. These buildings and their 19th and 20th c. successors, became primarily commercial buildings on a larger scale, completely losing the domestic character and thereby reducing their residential desirability. By mid 19th c. this area housed primarily markets (Blackstone and Union), clothing stores (Oak Hall on North st. and others on Blackstone st etc.)¹ furniture stores and similar functions. An inn, called the Blackstone House, was located in the corner building of North and Blackstone sts.

1 The Boston Directories supply specific information on building uses in the 19th c.

20TH CENTURY

Topography

The topography is changed only by the enlargement of Dock Square which required the removal of the buildings immediately surrounding the square, to accomodate the increased flow of traffic. In 1925, the corner of North and Union sts. was slightly cut back on Union st. in order to widen this important intersection. In 1951 John F. Fitzgerald Highway was cut through the Waterfront along the line of the north east side of Blackstone st.

Architecture

There were several buildings erected during the first quarter of the 20th c., all of which follow the basic plan of the replaced buildings. Typical of the period, they express little positive architectural character. The buildings are: #5-13 North st., a 4 story brick building with flat roof by Shepard & Stearns in 1926; #16-18 North st, a 5 story brick building Handschumacker, by Gilbert Miles Ramsey in 1922; #46-52 5 story brick building with flat roof by J.R. Worcester & Co. in 1928; and # 14-22 Marshall st., a 4 story brick building with flat roof by A.J. Carpenter in 1916.

Since 1928, there has been no change except for tearing down the upper stories of some buildings along Blackstone and North sts and the complete destruction of the 18th c. "Hancock Row" as well as the small blacksmith's shop in Creek Sq.

Summary

This small block clearly registers in its different aspects the development from the 17th c. - 20th c. in Boston. The 17th c. and 18th C. origin of this area is expressed in the pattern of narrow, meandering alleys and lanes, defining at this early time, the shapes of the lots that the buildings had to fit into, during the following centuries. The present day buildings clearly show the historical progression of commercial architecture from the 18thc. to the 20th c. in Boston. The buildings of the 18th c. are not only the oldest but also of the highest architectural quality in the area. The early 19th c. brick buildings record the genuinely straight forward approach to brick commercial architecture, in the mid 19th c. they become colorfully elaborated, and then at the end of the 19th c. and beginning of the 20th c. they had become wornout and uninteresting in the overworked use of revival motifs.

In summary, the last 250 years have effected these underlying changes: 1. the change from the combined commercial and residential life to only a commercial life, 2. the change from a series of small buildings lining the narrow little alleys and lanes to the large 5 & 6 story buildings adjusted to and still contained within these small scale boundaries and 3. the change from the small buildings looking inward onto the lanes and square to the large buildings facing out to the main streets.

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MAPS

- 1640-'50. Great Cove and vicinity. (S.C.Clough.1920)
1722. Bonner.
- 1728 Burgess.
1769. Revision of Bonner, 1722.
1814. Hales
- 1795- 1850- 1895. Charles Perkins.

Department and Societies

- BLP.L.- prints. Mass. Historical Society.
- City Hall - Buildings Dept., Street Dept. S.P.N.E.A.
- Courthouse- Suffolk Registry of Deeds

Section taken from the Final Report of the Boston National Historic Sites Commission in the consideration of an Historic District which would include the Blackstone Block.

1 "The establishment of an historic district operating with an historic districts commission under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to embrace the Faneuil Hall Area as a whole. Plausible limits for the Faneuil Hall Area to be included in an historic district are bounded generally by Union, Hanover, Blackstone, Clinton, Commercial and Chatham Streets, Merchants Row, Faneuil Hall Square and Dock Square.

Further attention to the details of creating suitable historic districts in the Faneuil Hall Area and elsewhere in Boston through legislation at the State level is one of the duties outlined for the Boston National Historic Sites Advisory Board, the establishment of which as a permanent body is one of the general recommendations to be made by the Commission in a succeeding section of this report.

3. In the event an historic district should fail to materialize and function as specified under 2, it will be the duty of the Boston National Historic Sites Advisory Board to advise the Secretary of the Interior with regard to the feasibility of more extensive participation by the Federal Government in a program of historical preservation and renewal for the Faneuil Hall Area.

Under the above provision, the Secretary of the Interior might conceivably be called upon to acquire private properties in order to provide adequately for the preservation and permanence of such Colonial and Revolutionary landmarks as the Union Oyster House, the Ebenezer Hancock House and the Boston Stone, and the 17th c. arrangement of lanes, alleys, and squares in the block bounded by Union, Hanover, Blackstone and North Streets.

The possibility of the Secretary of the Interior undertaking to negotiate cooperative agreements with the owners of business and mercantile properties in the block referred to in the preceding paragraph has been explored by the Commission. As a result, it is the Commission's conclusion that such a procedure would have no better prospects of success than an historic district, should adoption of the latter be attempted and fail. The cooperative agreement, therefore, would appear to offer no advantages in dealing with private property owners that are not also apparent in historic districts legislation at the State level!"

pp 15-16

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